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Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer  
State Historic Preservation Office  
Administration Building #203  
50 Sherburne Ave.  
Saint Paul, MN 55155



February 2, 2023

Dear Ms. Spong,

Many thanks to you and the entire State Historic Preservation Office for your consideration of the Nomination, prepared by Hess Roise, to Nominate Hiawatha Golf Club to the National Register. We appreciate the SHPO's informed, objective evaluation of this historic community resource.

As the Nomination describes in detail, Hiawatha Golf Club is indeed historically significant. First and foremost, it is the site of a foundational milestone in Minnesota's civil rights history: its clubhouse was the first in Minneapolis to admit African Americans. This color line was broken thanks to the persistent efforts of professional black golfer and civil rights advocate Solomon Hughes, who made Hiawatha his home course when he moved to Southside Minneapolis in 1943. At that time, Hiawatha was an 18-hole championship course where aspiring golfers could establish their credentials — something that was not possible on the 9-hole courses that black golfers, in some cities, were forced to play.

In the 1960s, Hiawatha became the permanent home of the annual (black-owned and operated) Bronze Amateur Memorial Golf Tournament, which continues today. In 1999, Tiger Woods chose Hiawatha to promote his First Tee initiative for young golfers because he knew Hiawatha Golf Course was an historically significant, 18-hole championship course.

What's more, as the Nomination shows, Hiawatha has long been more than a golf course. It remains a gathering place for the Black community in south Minneapolis. The course was built next to a historically redlined neighborhood where people of color created their own social infrastructure, thanks in part to the community-building efforts of Jimmie Slemmons, the unofficial mayor of Bronzeville (as the neighborhood was called) and founder of the Bronze Golf Tournament. That community has been dismantled since the 1950s when white decisionmakers chose to route Interstates 94 and 35W through the heart of Bronzeville. Unfortunately, today, the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board has passed a proposal that threatens to continue dismantling the Southside community by flooding its landscape of recreation and site of historic civil rights success.

Again, thank you for placing the Nomination of Hiawatha Golf Course before the State Review Board to help protect and preserve it. We urge the Board to approve the Bronze Foundation's Nomination and deliver it to the National Park Service for listing Hiawatha Golf Course on the National Register of Historic Places.

With warmest regards,

Darwin Dean, President  
Kimberley Dean, Vice President and Treasurer  
Jonathan Carlson, Secretary and Director of Communications